

Saying that the sheep market is wrecked in the Shortgrass Country is as much of an understatement as saying the president of Iraq is short tempered. Bad news keeps coming on so fast that we woolie operators can't stay up with the dire reports.

Other than a little spurt of interest by the farmers in August after the wettest July in our history, the buyers' section looks thinner every week, and the hangers-on around the auction are outdoing themselves predicting the end of the industry.

All summer, I've been shipping my lambs in dribbles, a few to private treaty and a few through the auction ring. The fellow that bought them at the ring said they'd have looked a lot better to him if I hadn't had such a messy shearing job on their legs and faces to fight off needle grass; then the buyer who took some of the same muttons and the light end of the. ewe lambs said that whoever was docking the tails for me was leaving them too long.

I ignored the august gentleman's complaint about the shearing job because in the 50 or 60 years he's been buying lambs he's had plenty of opportunities to load up on needle grass shriveled prospects. He knows that if I hadn't shorn those lambs in June, they wouldn't have out weighed a half grown jackrabbit by fall.

To the indictment on the tails, I had to admit that I'd been marking my own lambs for 42 years this past spring. Counting the Boss's stock and Uncle Goat Whiskers' outfit and a few invitations to help my neighbors, I'd done a whole lot to desecrate the tail length of Texas lambs. To all this the buyer replied (and I agreed), "Then, I suppose it's too late to change you on the subject of tails, Noelke."

So, now as the horizon darkens, I'm faced with cutting off more of their tails and shearing off less of their wool. Seems like the only time my lambs ever fit was when the feeders were making \$15 a head on them. I haven't heard the tune to this new song yet, but I think I've heard the words sung before.